

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

SECRET/SENSITIVE

INFORMATION

March 14, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: Lindsay Grant

SUBJECT: March 12 Ad Hoc Group Meeting on Laos

I attach summary minutes of the Thursday meeting of the Ad Hoc Group on Laos.

Attachment:

MORI/CDF per C05139234

Tab A - Minutes of Ad Hoc Group Meeting

OSD Review completed

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

State Dept. review completed

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AD HOC GROUP ON LAOS MEETING

March 12, 1970

SUMMARY MINUTES:

1. Intelligence. A massive attack on Ban Na is expected momentarily, and the CIA spokesman was pessimistic as to whether the post will hold. Ban Na is 27 kilometers from Long Tieng. It is an important element in the defensive ring for Long Tieng. If the Communists could capture it and bring their artillery in they could begin to hit the areas inhabited by Meo refugees and could precipitate a panicky flight.

Our advisers have urged Vang Pao to be ready to move toward a new site to the west. The fall of Long Tieng would force the abandonment of much equipment and the loss of the one airfield in the area, and would possibly force a decision as to whether the Meo continue to try to inhabit the hills between the Plain of Jars and Vientiane which serve as a buffer for Vientiane.

2. The Military Situation and U.S. Actions

- (a) Air Support. Our tacair planning levels call for some 140 sorties a day. There is a surge capability by diversion from Vietnam operations. The present level is adequate to hit all the meaningful targets that are being developed. No current change is warranted. A future reduction is implied, however, in the fact that planning figures for all of Southeast Asia for FY 1971 have been reduced. Defense is aware of the President's instruction that no reductions be made in Laos strikes without his concurrence. Defense has promised to report on the probable effects of the FY 1971 planned cut-backs.
- (b) Material support. Secretary Laird has authorized an additional \$30 million from the DOD budget to finance the current level of operations. This makes \$126 million available during FY 70 and permits continued supplies at the present rate. The Defense working level is assuming that the same rate will apply during FY 71. The FAR is currently consuming

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ammunition at the rate of \$64 million per year. This is largely exclusive of ammunition used by the Meo, which is supplied [REDACTED] The group assumes that most of the ammunition is being used by RLF T-28s, since FAR ground forces have done very little fighting. The Defense representative promised a study to see where the ammunition is going and whether the use rates are realistic. It was considered particularly important to check on MR IV, because any significant level of ammunition used there could well represent smuggling to the Communists.

- (c) Refugees. CIA and State will both send messages through their channels to learn what plans we have as to U.S. actions in the likely event of the massive flow of refugees from Long Tieng toward Vientiane. The Embassy is to be asked specifically whether the Meo refugees should be resettled west of the Communist's version of the '1962 line' so they will not be hostages to the annual dry season offensive.

3. Political Initiatives. State was asked to draft a cable authorizing Godley to compliment Souvanna on his public posture to date, without attempting to give him detailed advice as to his negotiating position with the Pathet Lao. (We are trying to persuade State to stop offering avuncular advice to Souvanna. He knows what our basic interests are and has shown that he is keeping them clearly in mind. Gratuitous guidance has not had much effect on him in the past, but we should avoid this small area of irritation.)

(BEGIN RESTRICTED SESSION)

4. The Chinese Road. It was agreed that Souvanna's "clarification" of the status of the Chinese road really obfuscated the issue even further. The group agreed that the suspicion is growing that he made some arrangement with the Chinese of which we are unaware. In any case, Souvanna does not appear anxious for us to proceed with the planned interdiction of the road building. State was asked to draft a cable for clearance by principals, making clear why Souvanna's statement raises problems, but suggesting that Godley mention these problems only if Souvanna raises the topic. Godley will be asked to refer any new approach by Souvanna back to Washington, since the conditions under which the interdiction had been approved may change before Souvanna comes to us.

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